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## Supporting Wellness in Adult Online Education

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### Abstract

Online education cannot continue to grow at the current pace while ignoring a crucial component of campus support, wellness for adult online learners. This paper brings awareness to the concept of wellness as an important student support service in adult online education. It includes a summarized review of relevant literature and identifies specific wellness concerns of adult online learners. The paper also provides examples of how three American higher education institutions are addressing the issue of wellness promotion in online learning. It identifies areas for improvement in current wellness initiatives and offers recommended strategies for supporting adult online learner wellness to professional organizations, institutions, instructors, and distance learners.

**Keywords:** adult learners; health promotion; online learning; retention; support services; wellness

### Introduction

There is clear evidence that online learning or e-learning, is growing at a considerable pace, as nontraditional learners with multiple responsibilities choose flexible, anytime, anywhere learning formats over face to face education to attain post-secondary certificates and degrees (Allen & Seaman, 2010). A report from the National Center for Education Statistics found that students 30 years and older, who are often married with children and have part or full time jobs, make up the largest percentage of students enrolled in online courses (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). As difficult economic conditions create competitiveness in the job market, it is expected that enrollment of older, reentry learners in online distance education will continue to grow (Allen & Seaman, 2010). There is also evidence that younger adult students are considering online education, with the expanding options and promised lower costs of some new program offerings (Aslanian & Clinefelter, 2012; Layne, Boston, & Ice, 2013).

Consistent with relevant literature, we identify *nontraditional students* as older learners, often with multiple roles and responsibilities. Studies show that nontraditional students are less healthy than traditional students (Quintiliani, Bishop, Greaney, & Whiteley, 2012). For example, the National Center for Health Statistics (2012), found a direct correlation between an increase in age and an increase in obesity in the United States. In addition, they found the likelihood of meeting federal physical fitness guidelines declines with increasing age (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). Further, one of the greatest challenges of being an adult learner is juggling the multiple roles of being a spouse, parent, colleague, and student. These converging responsibilities can be a source of stress and may be overwhelming to the point of poor academic performance or dropout (Müller, 2008; Ryan, Shocet & Stallman, 2010). In their section on Kember's Model of Student Completion, Moore and Kearsley (2005) offer this about Extracurricular Concerns: "A variety of extracurricular concerns—such as employment (e.g., job stability, workload), family responsibilities, health, and social interests—can adversely affect completion of distance education courses" (p. 161). Student support, retention, and satisfaction are all well researched topics in the field of

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distance education, and various support services and resources are often available to promote retention and satisfaction, however wellness promotion is one component of student support in adult online education that is overlooked as a potential strategy to increase retention and satisfaction. As online education continues to grow, wellness will surely become a topic of concern.

According to the American College Health Association (2012), the principal purpose of health promotion in higher education is to support student success. There is considerable research about the causal relationship between wellness and health promotion on campus, healthy student behaviors, and student success (American College Health Association, 2012; DeStefano & Harger, 1990; Myers & Mobley, 2004). While wellness promotion and resources are commonplace on American university and college campuses, adult online learners may be unable to access campus wellness services and resources due to physical distance from school; or the institution may provide adult online learners with wellness services and resources that are better suited for traditional students or none at all.

This paper highlights wellness promotion as a relevant topic in adult online distance education and a necessary component of the student support continuum in distance education. The purpose of this paper is three-fold: it identifies the unique wellness concerns of adult online learners and examines a cross section of what is currently being done to promote wellness in adult online education; it identifies areas for improvement in wellness promotion for adult online learners; and it offers discussion and strategies about ways to support health and wellness in adult online education.

## Background and Literature Review

There is little peer-reviewed literature about wellness for adult online learners. There are a few significant resources, such as Scheer and Lockee's 2003 publication, *Addressing the Wellness Needs of Online Distance Learners*, and Jones' 2006 guide, *Online Student Support Services: A Best Practices Monograph- Health and Online Services for the Online Student*, that specifically address wellness concerns of adult online learners. This section summarizes an extensive literature review, discussing the concepts of wellness and how wellness is addressed on campus and reports on the existing initiatives of wellness and health for online learners within the higher education realm.

Adult and nontraditional students are usually defined by their age, 25 or older, and multiple roles and responsibilities (Hermon & Davis, 2004; Myers & Mobley, 2004; Bauman, Wang, DeLeon, Kafentzis, Zavala-Lopez & Lindsey, 2004). Women make up the majority of adult and nontraditional students (Tweedell, 2010). As noted by Layne *et al.* (2013) the definition of *nontraditional student* is evolving to include a greater emphasis on shared attributes other than age, and new variations of online learners are beginning to lessen the distinction between traditional and nontraditional students. For the purposes of this paper, *adult online learners* are defined as students who are enrolled in a degree or certificate seeking program that requires a majority of course work to be completed online, usually 25 years old or older, who have additional roles such as being a spouse, parent, and colleague. Adult online learners usually work individually to complete assignments with mostly asynchronous interaction such as email and chats with their classmates and instructors. Adult online learners are often reentry students, lifelong learners, or those who are too busy with other roles and require the flexibility of online education.

## Wellness

*Wellness* is a concept that has evolved from meaning the absence of illness in the 1650s (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012), to "an integrated method of functioning, which is oriented toward

maximizing the potential of which the individual is capable" (Dunn, 1961, p. 6), to "an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence" (National Wellness Institute, n.d.). Wellness is a varying continuum based upon factors in an individual's life that affect health and wellbeing, and the individual working towards improving these factors and overall health and wellbeing. Hettler (1976) describes these factors in his six, interdependent dimensions of wellness, including:

- Occupational wellness, or "personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work" (para. 1)
- Physical wellness or "enhancing the body instead of impairing it" through physical activity, nutritious diet, and limiting the consumption of harmful foods and products (para. 2)
- Social wellness or "contributing to [the welfare of] one's environment and community" and living in harmony with others (para. 3)
- Intellectual wellness or "growing and stretching our minds" through "creative and stimulating mental activities" (para. 4)
- Spiritual wellness or "our search for meaningful purpose in human service" (para. 5)
- Emotional wellness or "awareness and acceptance of one's feelings. . . the degree to which one feels positive about one's self and life" (para. 6)

### **Wellness on Campus**

In the early 1980s, Dr. Bill Hettler began promoting the concept of wellness on college and university campuses as a means to support student success (DeSefano & Harger, 1990). In their 1990 report, DeStefano and Harger describe three years of implementing a successful student and faculty wellness program at Drury College based on Hettler's work. Since then, research has been conducted that shows the value of providing wellness services and resources on college and university campuses (American College Health Association, 2012; DeStefano & Harger, 1990; Myers & Mobley, 2004). Due to the increased social function of colleges and universities, and in order to maintain competitiveness, wellness centers should "be seen, not as unnecessary luxuries, but as integral components of higher education" (Kupchella, 2009, p. 2).

Most American colleges and universities provide students with an array of campus wellness services and resources. Campuses may be equipped with doctors and nurses, laboratories, pharmacies, student gyms, and other services to support student wellness. According to Jones (2006), there are six categories of wellness frequently addressed on campus, including: general health and wellness; addiction and substance abuse; sexual health; diet and nutrition; mental health; and safety and violence.

### **Wellness in Online Distance Education**

The need for a student support framework in online distance learning is an accepted standard in the distance education community. Institutional student support services in adult online education are commonplace, although most are still utilitarian. Services, such as, admissions and recruitment (Simpson, 2004); advising and orientation (Brindley, 1995); employment placement (Brindley & Ross, 2004); library services (George & Frank, 2004); and technical support make up support systems for adult online learners.

Our observation is that most online program administrators are apparently not concerned or focused on the need for wellness services as something of significance for the adult online learner population. This is evident in the lack of attention paid to the topic of wellness in adult online education in research and literature and the poor follow through and lack of effort by institutions to

provide wellness resources to adult online learners. Possible reasons for this are that wellness is thought to be common sense, and that adults are able to take care of themselves; that adult online learners do not desire a close relationship with the distance education provider; or that there are few differences in wellness needs between adult online learners and telecommuters or workers who are sedentary for many hours a day.

As discussed herein, such reasons can be rationally contested, and wellness in adult online learning should receive greater attention from institutions and from students themselves. Although wellness may be common sense for most adults, frequently it is not practiced without guidance and resources. It is apparent from the current statistics about adult obesity and physical fitness, that adults need support to live healthy lifestyles. Moreover, despite the notion that adult online learners do not desire a close relationship with the institution, according to LaPadula (2003), approximately one-third of respondents requested some type of social or wellness service be provided by the institution, and Aslanian and Clinefelter (2012) found about half of online students consider student support and coaching important services. Further, adult online learners have specific wellness needs that differ from those of telecommuters and other sedentary workers.

### **Wellness Concerns for Adult Online Learners**

As noted by Quintiliani *et al.* (2012), adult learners are less healthy than younger students. Adult online learners are susceptible to specific health issues. The following wellness concerns for adult online learners can be identified, including:

- Too many commitments, “multiple responsibilities” (Müller, 2008)
- Too much stress (Edwards-Hart & Chester, 2010; LaPadula, 2003; Müller, 2008; Ryan, Shocet & Stallman, 2010; Scheer & Lockee, 2003)
- Other emotional hurdles, like isolation, being overwhelmed or anxious (Müller, 2008)
- Diet, nutrition, and exercise (Hudd *et al.*, 2000; Jones, 2006; Ryan *et al.*, 2010; Scheer & Lockee, 2003)
- Ergonomics and posture (Harvard Repetitive Strain Injury Action, 2003; Scheer & Lockee, 2003)
- Prolonged sitting
- Unseen factors

Multiple commitments, stress, and emotional hurdles. The increased pressures of multiple responsibilities and scheduling conflicts of adult online learners described by Müller (2008) can be a source of stress. Online learning is also time consuming, and some adult online learners may be ill-equipped with the necessary time management skills and/or underestimate the amount of time needed to complete course work, potentially causing overlapping responsibilities or poor quality course work, which may also be a source of stress. Ryan *et al.* (2010) describes the high levels of stress experienced by university students and explains that high stress can lead to poor student performance. Further, stress from course work may exacerbate existing or underlying psychological conditions (Ryan *et al.*, 2010).

Multiple responsibilities can also lead to online learners feeling overwhelmed, anxious, and guilty about balancing heavy course loads along with work and familial obligations (Müller, 2008). Multiple commitments may also contribute to poor wellness lifestyle habits, for example, not getting enough sleep, exercise, or both, as well as poor eating habits (Hudd *et al.*, 2000). Such associations have not yet been made directly in the literature, given the little focus on wellness for online learners.

Diet, nutrition, and exercise. As Hudd *et al.* (2000) found, the busy lifestyle and stress of being a college student contributes to poor eating habits and lack of exercise. Along with the sedentary nature of online distance education, this combination can lead to poor physical wellness among adult online learners. A Center for Disease Control Report, *Health, United States, 2011*, indicates approximately 69 percent of Americans 20 years or older are overweight and about 36 percent are obese. The same report notes about only half of Americans 18 and older meet federal physical activity guidelines. With the exception of Blank's report, which studied nontraditional students on campus, there is no research regarding the diet and nutrition of adult online learners. However, the papers from Jones (2006), Ryan *et al.* (2010), and Scheer and Lockee (2003) all suggest that adult online learners are concerned with their physical wellness.

Ergonomics. Due to reports like Punnett and Bergqvist's (1997) on the effects of prolonged computer work, ergonomics is a significant consideration in the workplace to prevent repetitive strain injuries (RSI), also known as cumulative trauma disorders (CTD), and other musculoskeletal related disorders or vision problems caused from prolonged or incorrect use of computer, keyboard, and mouse, such as sitting, typing, or reading on screen. A 2002 study from Blatter and Bongers found that computer users began to feel discomfort in their necks and backs after four to six hours of computer use, and the longer and more frequent the computer use, the more likely the user was to experience chronic discomfort in these areas. Some workplaces utilize preventive strategies such as providing ergonomic equipment like chairs, headsets, footrests, or special keyboards, or they may provide guidance on how workstations should be arranged or other training on the proper use of equipment to prevent these types of health problems. However, there is little research about ergonomics and distance learning. As described in Spencer (2006), adult online learners spend many hours per day using the computer to complete course work. This number is doubled or tripled if the online learner's career also involves prolonged use of the computer, which is a trend in many professional activities. Further, the anytime, anywhere flexibility of online learning lends itself to the use of unconventional learning places, like the kitchen table, sofa, bed, or other workspace that may be convenient or comfortable but not ergonomically sound.

Prolonged sitting. Much of the time adult online learners spend completing course work on and off the computer is also time they spend sitting. This is in addition to time spent sitting at work, commuting, and relaxing. All of this time adds up to a significant amount of sitting for adult online learners. This is particularly troublesome due to recent studies that identify prolonged sitting as a serious health risk and predictor of increased mortality and chronic disease (Patel, Bernstein, Deka, Feigelson, Campbell, Gapstur, Colditz, & Thun, 2010). Patel *et al.* (2010) found sitting for longer than six hours was related to increased mortality, specifically cardiovascular mortality. Pronk, Katz, Lowry, and Payfer (2012) found reducing sitting time improved mood and decreased back and neck discomfort, and they recommend utilizing a sit/stand device for continuous computer use.

Unseen factors. Adult online learners are often isolated from classmates and instructors, and they may slip through the cracks of traditional student and social support systems, putting them at risk to suffer from silent or hidden conditions or abuse without being able to visually communicate to others their need for help. Many unhealthy conditions, for example eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, some mood disorders, and domestic violence have symptoms that can be seen by others who might offer assistance or support. For example, a student on campus with an eating disorder may be identified by her appearance, while an adult online learner with the same eating disorder may go unidentified by support systems, because she is never seen. Unseen factors are amplified by the lack of emotional venues available to adult online learners.



## A Sample of Wellness Support in Online Higher Education

The following examples in higher education were chosen, because they were mentioned in reviewed literature as examples of best practice of wellness support in distance education.

At George Mason University (GMU), students have access to free and low cost healthcare services and wellness resources, for example counseling, immunizations, and prescription management via the University's Student Health Services department (<http://shs.gmu.edu/services/distance.php>). With several on campus clinic locations as well as web-based wellness resources, the Student Health Services department serves GMU students both on and off campus. The University also offers health services specifically for its distance learners, such as after-hours nurses, a number for a "Patient Care Advocate" that offers "no medical advice" but can help distance learners find and coordinate health care services. Additionally, the site offers various online wellness resources for students, including smoking cessation aids, links to student health insurance providers, and a student health magazine. Although the site does not necessarily focus on distance learners' specific wellness needs, such as time management, stress management, and ergonomics, George Mason's Student Health Services for Distance Education is still impressive, because it specifically targets distance learners by giving them their own virtual space, and the Patient Care Advocate could be extremely helpful to busy adult online learners who need assistance finding resources and coordinating care.

The Ohio State University (OSU) in Columbus offers Student Wellness Centers both on campus and online. The virtual Student Wellness Center at OSU offers links to definitions of nine dimensions of wellness, including emotional, career, social, spiritual, physical, financial, intellectual, aesthetic, and environmental, as well as links to various educational resources on wellness topics such as, alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention, finances, diet and nutrition, relationships and sexual health, sexual violence, and stress and sleep (<http://www.swc.osu.edu/>). The website also lists the hours for the campus wellness center, statistics about Ohio State University student health, and a list of upcoming campus wellness events.

Located in Phoenix, Arizona State University (ASU) has a distance education division (ASU Online). ASU offers a comprehensive approach to addressing online wellness. In accordance with this mission, the site offers resources on alcohol and drug prevention, body image and eating disorders, depression and suicide, diet and nutrition, general health information, healthy relationships, safe and healthy spring break, sexual violence, sleep, and stress management. The site offers links to two student health groups, The Well Devils, and the Health and Counseling Student Action Committee. The site also links to social networking sites, Facebook, Flickr, and Pinterest. In addition to its own site, ASU (2010) utilizes an Online Wellness Center managed by a third-party contractor, Wellsource (<https://students.asu.edu/wellness/online-wellness-center>). Wellsource provides health risk assessment and computer assisted wellness services (Wellsource, 2012). Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any specific services or resources targeted to adult online learners; however, the broad amount of information and resources available likely serves the basic needs of a variety of students.

There are clearly areas for improvement in wellness promotion in adult online education. There is little peer-reviewed research about the topic and few standards, guidelines, or best practices models from distance education organizations. Although some institutions do provide wellness services, these are usually of broad scope and do not match the specific wellness needs of adult online learners or simply referrals to campus based resources that distance learners are unable to access. Additionally, other institutions have implemented wellness initiatives but have not followed through with their efforts, leading to broken or outdated web links to wellness resources.

## Recommendations

We have used the literature review to develop a set of recommended strategies to support wellness in adult online education. We have identified distinct players involved in the implementation of such strategies, including, professional organizations, institutions, instructors, peers, and individuals. A combination of support from these players is necessary for sustained outcomes in learner wellness.

### *Strategies for Professional Organizations*

Professional organizations within the distance education community should invest in research and promote discussion and awareness about wellness in adult online education. These influential organizations should offer best practices models and guidelines for supporting wellness. Furthermore, they should encourage proper implementation and follow through by online distance education providers.

### *Institutional Strategies*

Institutions must take on the responsibility of supporting wellness in adult online education. Institutions should address policy and systems by adapting a wellness policy that promotes “early intervention” and “universal prevention,” (Ryan *et al.*, 2010, p. 8). Institutions should create some entity or hire a contractor to oversee adult online learner wellness and provide services and resources. As Jones (2006) suggests, there is no single model for virtual campus wellness. Rather, each institution’s model should be based on the demographics and targeted needs of their unique student population (Jones, 2006). The questionnaires authored by Scheer and Lockee (2003) can be used as starting points for institutions to determine the wellness resources most likely to be used by their adult online learners. A survey by Ryan *et al.* (2010) found that adult online learners are most likely to use resources related to work-life balance, time management, stress, and diet and exercise.

Ratey and Loehr (2011) discuss the positive effects of exercise on adult cognitive processes and offer compelling arguments for comprehensive workplace wellness programs. It is recommended that institutions familiarize themselves with the overwhelming benefits of physical activity and consider mirroring workplace wellness programs and strategies, specifically those that increase adult distance learners’ physical activity. There is already evidence in primary education of the positive impact of exercise on grades and behavior by participants of the Spark Movement, an initiative to increase physical activity in schools inspired by Ratey’s research (TEDxTalks, 2012).

Moore and Kearsley (2012) write that a “student support service has to be proactive and reactive” and identify problems early to effectively intervene (p.170). Institutions should use data and automation to generate alerts concerning students’ performance, which could signal problems. These alerts would generate automated action or contact from advising and/or instructors to unveil further information of reasons for changes in online behavior. Wellness recommendations and services could help support students during stressful situations, which frequently affect academic performance. Academic analytics can be used to support wellness initiatives at the institutional level, as well as provide further information about the effectiveness of such services (Diaz & Brown, 2012).

Of the literature reviewed, personal counseling was the most recommended wellness resource. Scheer and Lockee (2003) recommend that personal counseling should be provided to adult online learners. A study from LaPadula (2003) found about one-third of respondents were interested in receiving personal counseling. Müller (2008) suggests mental health counseling to help students with the social effects of online education, especially isolation.

Since research shows that most adults use the Internet to obtain health and wellness information (Weaver, Mays, Weaver, Hopkins, Eroglu & Bernhardt, 2010), institutions should offer an online wellness portal (Scheer & Lockee, 2003). Jones (2006) suggests that institutions use a variety of media, such as text, video, and interactive applications, to present web-based wellness resources. ASU's Wellsource, mentioned above, exemplifies this mixed-media approach.

As illustrated by George Mason University, institutions should consider implementing a referral or case manager service to help busy adult online learners identify nearby health care services and coordinate care. It is also recommended that institutions facilitate peer-to-peer wellness support networks via social networking tools such as Facebook and Pinterest.

Institutions play a critical role in raising awareness of instructors and advisers when it comes to wellness. Further, they must offer training to instructors and support staff on how to support wellness at the virtual classroom level. For example, institutions should provide instructors with various templates so instructors use correct guidelines and resources. This support to instructors from the institution is necessary for effective initiatives, since not all instructors will have the same level of knowledge and awareness of wellness.

### ***Strategies for Instructors***

The instructor also plays an important role in supporting wellness among his/her students. There are several ways instructors can support wellness in adult online learning, however these activities are likely ill-fated without the institutional support and guidance described above. Examples of instructional support include monitoring student performance (preferably using institutional alert systems and data), encouraging and offering opportunities for physical activity during normally sedentary course work, and being good stewards of wellness concepts.

Moore and Kearsley (2012) suggest closely monitoring student output and reaching out to students if there are significant decreases in their productivity. If an adult online learner is consistently completing timely, quality assignments, and suddenly there is a notable decrease in punctuality or quality without communication, the instructor should send the student an email to show concern about the student's progress as well as determine the cause of the poor performance. This type of early instructor intervention can increase motivation and ease stress and isolation of the online learner. If a wellness concern is found to influence the student's poor performance, the instructor should be empathetic, offer reasonable extensions to complete course work, and refer the student to the institution's wellness services. Such monitoring has become more common through collection of data from institutional learning management systems and other digital systems. Instructors can also utilize these learner analytics to identify at-risk students.

Additionally, instructors can use instructional design to scaffold wellness promotion into courses. With institutional guidance, instructors should be aware of opportunities to address wellness dimensions whenever possible. For example, to address the health risks associated with prolonged sitting, instructors might encourage students to complete a physical activity, such as taking a walk, while listening to audio files of course readings.

Furthermore, distance education instructors must be good stewards of wellness concepts by practicing healthy lifestyles and encouraging their students to be well. Instructors should pay attention to the wellness images they portray and work towards setting positive wellness examples. Institutions can support this approach by raising awareness about instructor wellness. In addition, instructors should be amiable and approachable enough to reduce unnecessary stress on adult online learners.



### **Peer-to-Peer Strategies**

Support from peers is critical to adult online learner wellness. There are various ways these learners can offer each other support to improve wellness. Some examples include support groups via social networking sites or discussion boards. Peers can also support one another by email, phone, and audio and video chat. The institution can encourage such peer support through awareness and by creating online environments where peers can connect with others beyond classroom discussion. This sense of community is essential to improving wellness.

### **Personal Strategies**

Ultimately, the adult online learner must take responsibility for his own wellness. The individual must consider wellness a priority and be motivated to practice a healthy lifestyle, despite the stressful and time consuming nature of online distance learning. The adult online learner must resolve to avoid harmful substances and behaviors, make healthy decisions, such as eating a lean, nutritious diet, and participate in physical and spiritual activities even when the learner's schedule is already full. Such attitude should be embodied by all the institutional initiatives mentioned earlier.

### **Summary of Recommendations:**

- Invest in wellness research
- Develop and publish professional wellness guidelines and standards
- Encourage implementation and follow through by colleges and universities
- Create entity to oversee wellness and provide resources
- Measure wellness needs of students
- Provide personal counseling to all adult online learners
- Develop useful virtual wellness resources
- Implement a wellness referral or case management program
- Train instructors and support staff on wellness
- Support learners' awareness about their own wellbeing

### **Final Remarks**

In addition to highlighting wellness as a significant concern in adult online education, this paper identified specific examples of adult online learner wellness needs, described areas for improvement, and offered recommendations and strategies to support wellness in adult online learning. The issue of adult online learner wellness must be addressed to improve the quality of online distance education and continue to scale distance education at its current pace. With student retention and course completion as chief concerns among distance education providers, and health a common reason learners withdraw from online courses (Müller, 2008), there is clearly opportunity for improvements in wellness services in adult online education.

Openings exist for further research on wellness for adult online learners. A 2012 EDUCAUSE focus session on learning analytics acknowledges the importance of students' "dispositional data. . . [as the] ability to self-regulate can tell us a lot about their wellness and ability to learn, and there are techniques to pick this up" (Essa, A., as qtd. in Diaz & Brown, 2012, p. 13). Once distance education organizations and institutions adapt professional wellness standards and implement wellness programs, research can be completed to determine the effects of supporting wellness in adult online education. It is anticipated that this research would confirm that supporting wellness for adult online learners causally contributes to higher course completion and learner satisfaction

rates, along with lower withdrawal rates, and fewer repeated classes would mean learners would take less time to complete their degrees. The behaviors of distance education instructors and tutors, such as poor ergonomics and prolonged sitting, are similar to the students they teach and support. The wellness risk factors associated with online instruction should also be researched to provide institutions with holistic ways to support faculty. Further research in this area could improve job conditions and satisfaction among distance education instructors and tutors.

After exploring the current landscape of wellness services for adult online learners, it is clear much more could be done to provide these students with proper wellness resources. Wellness concepts can be applied no matter what form of learning is being pursued, and the correlation between improved health and improved student performance and attendance translates to online learning. The online distance education movement cannot continue to grow at this rapid pace, while ignoring a critical component of student support, wellness for adult online learners.

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